

O 121253Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9565  
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMCONSUL CHENNAI  
AMCONSUL MUMBAI  
AMCONSUL TORONTO  
USEU BRUSSELS  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USMISSION GENEVA  
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
DIA WASHINGTON DC  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//  
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000283

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER, CAMP), SCA/INS AND PRM  
STATE ALSO PASS USAID  
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)  
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)  
ATHENS FOR PCARTER  
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)  
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)  
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)  
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)  
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY  
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 30

Ref: A) Colombo 279 B) Colombo 277 C) Colombo 265 D) Colombo 258  
E) Colombo 250 F) Colombo 248 G) Colombo 247 H) Colombo 245 I)  
Colombo 240 J) Colombo 235 K) Colombo 230

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a March 12 meeting Ambassador pressed Defense Secretary to minimize civilian casualties. The U.N. reports 2,683 killed and 7,241 injured in fighting from January 20-March 7. UN Resident Representative Buhne informed Ambassador that 72 persons were killed and 91 injured as the result of continued shelling in the no-fire zone on March 11. WFP food aid is again being offloaded and delivered into the no fire zone. End Summary.

Ambassador Meets Defense Secretary

¶2. (SBU) In a March 12 meeting with Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Ambassador expressed regret over the recent bombing near the Jumma Mosque in Matara District (ref A). Rajapaksa indicated that Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mahinda Wijesekera was conscious and would survive, but, lamented the lax precautions taken by the personal security officers charged with security at the festival.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador on several occasions, urged the Defense Secretary to do everything he can to minimize civilian casualties in the North by stopping shelling into the no-fire zone, even when fired upon by LTTE positions there. Rajapaksa expressed surprise at the reports of civilian casualties saying Air Force jets had not flown the past two days due to heavy weather. The Ambassador responded the casualties had reportedly come from multi-barrel rocket launchers and again urged the local commanders be instructed not to fire into the safe zone. Rajapaksa expressed doubt about some of the alleged civilian casualties, noting that a good number

of the wounded in Trincomalee are likely LTTE cadres. He said he had tasked health authorities to determine how many killed and wounded might be LTTE cadres.

14. (SBU) Ambassador inquired about the situation in the North to which the Defense Secretary responded the Sri Lankan military had met "stiff resistance" and were only half way through PTK; however, they were able to seize the hospital today. When asked why a planned International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) sea evacuation of wounded was held up on March 11, Rajapaksa stated intelligence reports indicated that 5 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) suicide bombers were attempting to infiltrate the boat which caused a halt to the evacuation. Rajapaksa was hopeful the evacuations would commence as early as today if possible. Rajapaksa also stated that he believed LTTE Supremo Prabakaran was still alive and indicated he firmly believed Prabakaran would fight to the end.

15. (SBU) Ambassador reiterated that once the GSL takes control of PTK it is important that the military not enter the safe zone. Rajapaksa repeated his pledge to not enter the safe zone and stated that the Army would take a passive stance on its boundary once the other areas were secured. Ambassador inquired whether the Defense Secretary believed people would be able to escape the safe zone and Rajapaksa relayed that 22 boats, carrying 365 civilians had managed to evade the LTTE and make it to Jaffna recently. According to

Rajapaksa, when the LTTE found out about the escapees they drilled holes in the remaining boats. Rajapaksa admitted that the military had made mistakes in prior estimates but now believed only 400 LTTE cadres remained. He argued that once active fighting was reduced and the Sri Lankan Army took a more passive stance around the safe zone more civilians would be able to flee.

UN: 9,924 Casualties Jan 20-Mar 7  
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16. (SBU) The U.N. reports that from January 20 to March 7 the total minimum number of civilians killed is 2,683 with an additional 7,241 civilians injured.

17. (SBU) U.N. Resident Representative Neil Buhne informed Ambassador that 72 persons were killed and 91 injured on March 11 due to continued shelling in the no-fire zone. BuQ reported that a multi-barrel rocket launcher sent 40 shells into the zone in one barrage and 21 of the 72 deaths were individuals who had been in line to receive their ration of food. Buhne stated that upon learning of the shelling the U.N. immediately spoke with the military in Vavuniya and requested the shelling cease.

Offloading of Food Aid Resumes  
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18. (U) The cargo ship "Vin-Tan", carrying 500 MTs of food aid returned offshore of the conflict area. The World Food Programme had offloaded 144 MTs of food on March 8 but rough seas forced it to return to Trincomalee. WFP is now discharging the remaining food onto small fishing boats. WFP expects the offloading to take two and a half days. The Government has indicated its willingness to continue the operation of this vessel with humanitarian food aid, as long as there are no security incidents. WFP has enough food in stock in Trincomalee for almost three more 500 MTs cargos.

Food Aid Reaches IDPs in Jaffna by Land  
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19. (U) A convoy of 22 GSL trucks carrying 261 MTs of WFP food (mostly USAID Title II) arrived March 10 in Jaffna, having departed March 8 and traveled along the A-9. The food will be distributed to IDPs and other economically vulnerable people in Jaffna. This is the first civilian food convoy to have traveled the main north-south highway since August 2006.

More Injured Waiting to Be Evacuated  
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110. (SBU) ICRC reports that they have 1000 patients waiting to be evacuated from the no-fire zone. Recent medical supplies that were

sent were used within two days of their arrival.

#### LTTE Finance Chief Killed

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¶11. (U) The Army reported that the LTTE's Financial Division head Ranjith Appa alias Tamilendi was killed in the latest fighting in Puthukuduirippu east area.

BLAKE